

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-5, 7-13 and 28-38 are pending in the application, all of which stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Mercuri et al. (U.S. 5,902,762), or Mercuri et al. in view of Howard (U.S. 4,961,991). Although a response patentably distinguishing the rejected claims from the cited references was filed on July 15, 2003, the Advisory Action mailed August 19 indicates that the response did not put the rejected claims in condition for allowance

because Mercuri et al. discloses a flexible graphite composite for use in gaskets comprising a resin-impregnated flexible graphite sheet of about 0.1 mm and regions of randomly embedded ceramic fibers (zones with different characteristics, i.e. presence and composition of filler materials)(column 2, lines 1-67). The graphite material with the randomly embedded fibers represents the differing zones of flexible graphite material.

However, it is respectfully submitted that a [dispersion of ceramic fibers throughout a graphite sheet cannot constitute or suggest the differing zones of the current claims]. More particularly, claim 1 of the above-captioned application requires "a composite flexible graphite sheet comprising a plurality of zones of flexible graphite sheet..." It is certainly a stretch to read Mercuri et al. as suggesting differing flexible graphite zones by the inclusion of fibers randomly dispersed throughout a flexible graphite sheet. Indeed, the only way to fit a suggestion of the claimed invention into the Mercuri et al. disclosure is to assert that the areas surrounding each of the Mercuri et al. fibers constitute "micro-zones," and ignore the random distribution of the fibers throughout the Mercuri et al. sheet and place a non-existent

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boundary between these fiber zones and the inter-fiber areas of the Mercuri et al. sheet. Clearly, doing so is effecting a tortured and unreasonable reading of Mercuri et al.

At best, each sheet of Mercuri et al. can be considered a single zone if laminated with other flexible graphite sheets of differing characteristics, but there is no teaching in either Mercuri et al. or Howard of doing so. As such, all claims 1-5, 7-13 and 28-38 are patentably distinguished over the references, and should be allowed.

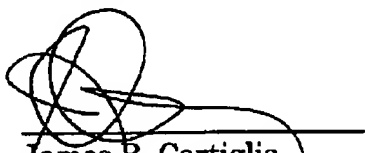
### CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing remarks, it is believed the above-captioned application is in condition for allowance. Such action is earnestly sought. If there remains any matter which prevents the allowance of any of pending claims 1-5, 7-13 and 28-38, the Examiner is requested to call the undersigned, collect, at 615-242-2400 to arrange for an interview which may further expedite prosecution.

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The Commissioner is authorized to charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment associated with the filing of this Response to Deposit Account 50-1202.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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